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# Infant Baptism

## A Discourse

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BY

REV. I. S. McELROY

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PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION  
RICHMOND, VA.

# INFANT BAPTISM:

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## Infant Baptism.

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"And I baptized also the household of Stephanas."

1 COR. 1. 16.

THE subject to which I shall address myself is not of my choosing, but was selected for me by your beloved and gifted pastor. His urgent request is my only apology for attempting to interest and instruct you with a theme that has been so often treated, and by those so much more capable of doing justice to its importance. I promise nothing new or original, but shall try "to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." The theme is on the face of the text, which states two facts distinctly—*Stephanas had a family* (household); *Paul baptized the family* (household) of Stephanas. This is the doctrine of household or family (commonly called infant) baptism. I shall give you a few reasons why *it is the solemn duty and the sweet privilege of every member of the church of God to have his or her children baptized.*

I.

CHILDREN ARE CHURCH MEMBERS.

The children of church members *are* members of the church. Your children are citizens of Kentucky. Such they have been from their birth, or since you became a citizen of this commonwealth. As citizens they are counted in the census, are entitled to the protection and nurture of the state, and are expected to grow up fitted for the active duties of adult citizenship. In the same sense and for the same reason that the children of a citizen of Kentucky *are* citizens of Kentucky, the children of church members *are* members of the church.

PROOF.

1. *Children were members under the Old Testament.* This is admitted by all. The children of the Jews were born, circumcised at eight days old, and grew up *in the church* of their fathers. They were as truly members of the church as they were members of the nation. This has not, will not, cannot be denied.

2. *The Old and New Testament church is identical.* The New Testament contains no record of the organization of the visible church. The existence of an institution called the church,

claiming a divine origin and a covenant relation to God, is a fact beyond dispute. The identity of this church with that mentioned in the second chapter of the Acts is claimed and admitted by all Christians. We turn to that chapter and find not one line of a covenant under which the church was to be organized, and no record of its *organization*. We read: "The same day there were *added* unto them about three thousand souls;" "the Lord *added* to the church daily such as should be saved." The church was in existence already, for these converts were *ADDED* to the church. They were *additional*, not *original* members. We turn back to the gospels, and we find our Saviour saying of the offending brother, "If he neglect to hear them, tell it to *the church*," etc. (Matt. xviii. 17.) But neither here nor elsewhere, in either of the gospels, nor in the Acts of the Apostles, nor from the opening verse of Matthew to the last verse of Revelation, can be found any record of the organization of the church, or a divine covenant under which it was to be organized. The first and every subsequent mention of the church in the New Testament is that of an existing institution, whose organization was effected at some previous time. This fact forces us back



into the Old Testament to find the origin of the church, and therefore the church is one and the same in its identity under both dispensations.

We turn to the Old Testament, and trace this church back through the prophecies, the Psalms, and the histories to the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, 'the book of the beginnings,' where we find the beginning of the visible church as an organized society. Here is the record of the organization of the church, and that warrants the claim of a divine origin and covenant relation to God. All will agree, I suppose, that this is either the ecclesiastical covenant under which the church was organized or the national covenant of the Jews. It cannot be the latter, and must therefore be the former, for this *first* covenant was made with Abraham as the representative of "*many nations*." (Gen. xvii. 4.) "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end that the promise might be sure to *all* the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, as it is written, I have made thee a father of *many nations*." (Rom. iv. 16, 17.) *Second*, Abraham's "*seed*" were not his natural, nor his national, but his spiritual descendants. "For

they are not all Israel that are of Israel; that is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the *seed*." (Rom. ix. 6 and 8.) *Third*, The Gentiles, although never a part of the Jewish nation, were included in this covenant. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law; . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the *Gentiles* through Jesus Christ: and if ye be Christ's, then are ye *Abraham's seed*, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. iii. 13, 14, 29; see Rom. iv. 16, 17.) *Fourth*, The "token of the covenant" was not a badge of natural descent nor a pledge of national blessings, but "a seal of the righteousness of faith" (Rom. iv. 11.) *Fifth*, Abraham is called "the father of *all* them that believe," "the father of us all," etc., (Rom. iv. 11 and 16,) and yet he is not our natural, nor our national, and therefore he must be our ecclesiastical father, who represented us in this covenant of the church as Adam did in the covenant of works, and as Noah did in the covenant of security against a second flood. *Sixth*, Under this covenant the family of Abraham was organized, not into the Jewish nation, which did not occur until four hundred and thirty years after (Ex.

xix. 40), but into a society of religious worshippers, the purpose of which was to perpetuate the religion of the only true God, and equipped with religious rulers and teachers, with provision for the reception and the discipline of members, with the two great sacraments of the church—(sacrifices pointing forward to the death of Christ, to which the Supper points back, and circumcision, which signifies the same, as is now done by baptism; “the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh”)—with the Sabbath and the sanctuary, with the oracles of God and the gospel of his grace. “For the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, *preached before the gospel unto Abraham*, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” (Gal. iii. 8.) *Seventh*, This society is repeatedly called the church of God; as, for example, Stephen said of Moses, “This is he that was in *the church* in the wilderness” (Acts vii. 38); and Paul quotes David as saying, “In the midst of *the church* will I sing praises unto thee.” (Heb. ii. 12.) These facts, which cannot be denied, show conclusively that this covenant in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis is not the national covenant of the Jews, nor a covenant of temporal blessings for Abraham’s

natural descendants, but the covenant of the church of God.

Four hundred and thirty years after this church was organized in the family of Abraham, it was arrayed in the cumbrous ritual of the Mosaic economy, which served its purpose, and was then cast off for the simpler forms of the Christian dispensation. (Heb. ix. 1–16.) But this did not destroy the identity of the church; “for the covenant (Abrahamic), confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” (Gal. iii. 17.) If the bud has preserved its identity in passing through the flower into the fruit; if the boy has preserved his identity in passing through his youth into manhood, so has the church preserved its identity in passing from the patriarchal, through the Mosaic, into the Christian dispensation. As the church preserved its identity after it had taken on the Mosaic economy, so it preserved its identity after it had cast off that economy, and the church of which Jesus spake in Matt xviii. 17, and to which the converts were “*added*” on the day of Pentecost, is the same in its identity as the church in the temple, in the tabernacle, and in the tent



of Abraham. This fact explains, what is otherwise inexplicable, why the New Testament contains no record of the organization of the church nor of its covenant. Of course not, for that record is in the Old Testament. Even if the seventeenth chapter of Genesis were not (*but it is*) the record of the organization of the church, still the identity of the church cannot be denied, for the church did exist under the Old Testament (Acts vii. 38; Heb. ii. 12; iii. 5, 6), and neither Stephen, nor Paul, nor any other person in the New Testament intimates that it was not the same church as that in which they lived and labored. There is not one passage in all the Bible that intimates that the church under the Old Testament is not identical with that under the New Testament, but many passages that teach clearly the contrary, and therefore the church is the same under both Testaments.

*The identity of the sacraments teach the identity of the church.* The Lord's Supper was instituted in immediate connection with the observance of the passover, and in such a manner as shows clearly that it is the *Jewish Passover christianized*. (Matt. xxvi. 17-30.) The *form* of the sacrament is changed, because

the truth symbolized has passed from prophecy into history, but the sacrament preserves its identity. I do not suppose any one will question this statement, for the apostle confirms it when he says, "Christ *our* passover is sacrificed for us." (1 Cor. v. 7.)

Baptism sustains the same relation to circumcision that the Supper sustains to the Passover, viz, *the same sacrament christianized*. Circumcision was not a mark of natural descent, for it was applied to strangers (Gen. xvii. 12; Ex. xii. 48), nor was it a part of the politico-ecclesiastical state of the Jews, for it preceded the Mosaic institutions by four hundred and thirty years (Gal. iii. 17); but it was the *token* of the covenant (Gen. xvii. 11), and so is baptism (Acts ii. 38-41); it was the *badge* of church membership (Ex. xii. 48), and so is baptism (Matt. xxviii. 19); it was the *seal* "of the righteousness of faith" (Rom. iv. 11), and so is baptism (Acts iii. 19); it was the *symbol* of purification, "the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh (Col. ii. 11), and so is baptism (Rom. vi. 4); it was used by the apostle interchangeably with baptism, as another word for the same thing, explaining the nature of baptism, of which he spoke, as Christian circum-

cision. (Col. ii. 11-13.) If things equal to the same things are equal to each other, then circumcision and baptism are identical—the same sacrament in different forms, as is true of the Passover and the Supper. This explains that otherwise inexplicable FACT, that the hundred and twenty disciples never received *Christian* baptism. They had been circumcised, had never lost their place in the church, as had those Jews who rejected Christ (Acts iii. 22, 23), and therefore being *already members* of the church when the *form* of the sacrament was changed, there was no need for them to receive this sacrament in its changed form. But those Jews who had been “destroyed *from among the people*,” cast out of the church, because of their rejection of Christ, when they sought readmittance were required to receive again this sacrament, which is the badge of membership, and to receive it in its christianized form.

The sacraments being the same in identity, but different in form, it follows that the church to which they belonged is the same in identity, though different in its forms.

*Certain promises made to the church under the Old Testament, which have been and are now being fulfilled to the church under the*

*New Testament, necessitate the identity of the church.* All the promises to and prophecies concerning the church found in the Old Testament witness that the then existing church would continue till “nature yields her last tremendous græan.” Two of these witnesses will suffice for all. In the second chapter of Joel we read, “Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; . . . and it shall come to pass afterward that I will *pour out my Spirit* upon all flesh; and *your sons and your daughters shall prophesy*,” etc. When did this “come to pass?” Peter answered on the day of Pentecost, saying, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will *pour out my Spirit* upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,” etc. (Acts ii. 16, 17.) Pentecost was promised to the church under the Old Testament, but was given to the church under the New Testament, eight hundred years afterwards, and therefore these were not two, but one and the same church.

In the prophets we read this promise many times, “Sing O barren, thou that didst not bear, . . . for thou shalt break forth on the right hand



and on the left, and *thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles.*" (Isa. liv. 3.) "The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee; the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." (Isa. lx. 5.) "These shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim" (China). (Isa. xlix. 12.) This oft-repeated promise, first made in the Abrahamic covenant, "thou shalt be a father of MANY nations," only began to be fulfilled when Peter was sent to Cornelius (Acts x. 9-48), received a richer fulfilment under the ministry of Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles (Acts xiii. 46-49; xviii. 6; xxviii. 28); but its richest fulfilment has been in this, the century of missions, and yet that promise remains big with blessings for the future. Now this promise of the ingathering of the Gentiles, the coming of the Chinese into the church, the conversion of the isles of the sea—this promise was made to the church under the Old Testament hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, but it has only been and is now being redeemed to the church under the New Testament, and therefore these are not two, but one and the same church. Promises made to one church cannot be redeemed by bestowing the promised benefit on a

different church, and therefore the identity of the church must be the same under both Testaments, for God's promises *cannot* fail.

*Christ and his apostles taught the identity of the church.* On one occasion (Matt. xxi. 33-46,) Jesus said a householder planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen; sent his servants at harvest time to receive the fruits; but those husbandmen beat his servants, and killed others, and stoned others; and at last, when the householder sent his son, they cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When Jesus asked the chief priests and elders what the lord of the vineyard would do unto those husbandmen, they answered, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will *let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen,*" etc. Jesus said, "*Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*" The kingdom (church) of God which has been transferred to the Gentiles is the very same that was taken from the Jews, out of which they cast and slew the Son of God. It is the identity of the church that gave point and power to this parable.

When explaining the parable of the Good

Shepherd, Jesus said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be *ONE FOLD* and one Shepherd." (John x. 16.) The Gentile sheep were not gathered into a *new* fold, but were brought into that same one to which the Jews belonged. The sheep, or professed people of God, may be changed, but the fold, the church of God, preserves its identity through all ages and external changes. *One fold* for Jews and Gentiles, because one church of God under both Testaments.

This truth is presented in a very clear and striking light in the eleventh chapter of Romans, where the apostle discusses the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles. He represents the church as a good olive tree, the Jews its natural branches, and the Gentiles the branches of a wild olive. He says these natural branches were "broken off" because of unbelief—the Jews cast out of the church for rejecting Christ; and the branches of the wild olive were "grafted *contrary to nature* into the good olive tree"—the Gentiles gathered *by grace* into the church; and that these natural branches (Jews), "if they abide not in belief,

shall be grafted into *THEIR OWN* olive tree again when "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." As the good olive tree preserves its identity through all the breaking off and grafting in of branches, so the church preserves its identity through all the changes which have and may be made in its membership.

In the ninth chapter of Hebrews the apostle says that the beginning of the Christian dispensation was the time of the *reformation* of the church; that the carnal ordinances of the Mosaic economy were "*imposed until the time of reformation,*" when Christ would come and obtain eternal redemption. (Heb. ix. 10.) Christ and his apostles did not *destroy* the old and *organize* a new, but they *reformed* the church of God. But reformation necessitates the previous existence, and the after-continuance of that which has been reformed, and therefore the church existed *before*, and continued to exist after, the reformation effected by Christ and his apostles. Its forms were changed; *its identity was preserved.*

Stephen said of Moses, "This is he which was *in the church* in the wilderness (Acts vii. 38); and Paul identifies this "church in the wilderness" with the church under the new



Testament; for he says, "Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant; . . . . but Christ as a son over his own house; *whose house are we,*" etc. (Heb. iii. 5, 6), "the house of God, which is the church of the living God," etc. (1 Tim. iii. 15.) Moses was a servant, Christ the Son, Paul an apostle, Timothy an evangelist, and New Testament believers were members in the *same* "house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the earth."

Here I will rest this line of the argument. I desist, not because I have exhausted the evidence, but because I do not wish to exhaust your patience and insult your intelligence by offering additional proof for what must appear to you as already proved "beyond the shade of the shadow of a doubt." Now *the children of church members were members of the church under the Old Testament. Admitted. The church under the Old Testament is identical with the church under the New Testament. Proved from the Scriptures. Therefore the children of church members ARE members of the church under the New Testament. No escape from this conclusion.*

# THE NEW TESTAMENT CONFIRMS THIS CONCLUSION.

When the disciples forbade the mothers to bring their *infants* to Jesus, he said, "Suffer little children (vs. 15, *infants*) to come unto me, and forbid them not; *for of such is the kingdom of God.*" (Luke xviii. 15.) "Of such" has here its uniform scriptural meaning—*these* and the like. "They which commit *such* (*these* and the like) things are worthy of death." (Rom. i. 32; see 1 Cor. v. 11; Gal. v. 21; 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5; 3 John 8; Acts xix. 25.) In every passage in the New Testament in which this word "such" occurs, it means *these* and the like, and it must have the same meaning in this passage. "The kingdom of God" is the church of God, as in Matt. xiii. 47; xxi. 33, etc. This is generally admitted. When therefore Jesus said, "Of these and the like (such) is the church (kingdom) of God," he taught the membership of the children most clearly and emphatically.

In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you; . . . for the promise is unto you and to *your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts ii. 38, 39.) This promise was that made to Abraham (Rom. iv. 13-17), in which the chil-



dren were expressly included with their parents, and their church membership secured. When therefore Peter quoted to that assembly of Jews this promise, which had given the children a place in the church under the Old Testament, he recognized and reaffirmed the church membership of the children under the New Testament. He quoted this promise as meaning on the day of Pentecost just what it meant when spoken to Abraham, viz., *the children are members with their parents.*

In his first Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle teaches, that if only one parent is a believer, the faith of that parent will so far sanctify the marriage relation as to preserve the church membership of their children. These Christians were in trouble. They saw the children of believers treated as "*the holy*," and the children of unbelievers treated as "*the unclean*;" but what was the status of those children whose parents were, one a believer the other an unbeliever? Should they be classed with "*the holy*" or with "*the unclean*?" Ought the believing husband or wife to separate from the unbelieving wife or husband, so that the children of the believing parent might be treated as "*the holy*?" The apostle answers that it

was not necessary for them to separate, "for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."

The word *holy*, or *saint*, is the one most commonly used in the New Testament to designate church members, and for the reason that this word means separated unto God, and the members of his church are the only people professedly and formally so separated. We find the apostle directing his epistles to *the saints (the holy)* at Rome, to *the saints (the holy)* at Corinth, etc. When therefore he called those children of a believing parent at Corinth *holy (saints)*, he meant just what he did when he called the parents *saints (the holy)*, viz., that they were separated unto God, were members of the church of God. This is the meaning of the word when applied to the parents (1 Cor. i. 2) all admit, and this is its meaning when applied to the children (1 Cor. vii. 14), for it is the same word, the same writer, the same letter, and the most common meaning of the word when applied to persons in the New Testament. Paul says the children of a believing parent are members of the church (*saints, holy*).

The apostle directs his letter "to the saints (church members) which are at Ephesus;" and in this letter he says: "Husbands, love your wives;" "wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands;" "servants, be obedient . . . to your masters;" "fathers, provoke not your children to wrath;" "children, obey your parents in the Lord." What husbands, wives, servants, fathers and *children* are meant? Why, those to whom the letter was addressed, those who were saints or church members at Ephesus. These children were saints (church members) as really as were these husbands, wives, servants and fathers, for the apostle does not send a message to the children, saying, *tell* the children to obey their parents, but he speaks to them directly, saying, "Children, obey your parents." In this and in the letter to the Colossians the church membership of the children is as distinctly recognized as that of any other class of society. They ARE members.

Now for the conclusion of this argument.

*Every member of the church may and should be baptized. This is admitted by everybody. The children of church members are members of the church. This has been proved from the Scriptures. Therefore the children of*

*church members may and should be baptized. This is SOLEMN DUTY, no less than sweet privilege. Duty neglected is sin.*

## II.

### THE APOSTLES HABITUALLY PRACTICED HOUSEHOLD OR FAMILY (INFANT) BAPTISM.

Whenever they baptized a father or a mother they also baptized their children, if present. There is not a single exception to this rule on record. The New Testament records only nine individual baptisms. Four of these were of persons (Paul, Simon, Gaius, and the Eunuch), who, so far as the record shows, had no family. Four of these were of persons (Cornelius, Stephanas, Lydia, and the jailer), each of whom had a family, and *the baptism of that family is distinctly recorded*. The ninth was Crispus, whose children were old enough to claim baptism on their own faith, for it is recorded that he "believed on the Lord with all his house." (Acts xviii. 8.) The fact that the faith of this family is mentioned shows clearly that in each of the other four families, where no faith is mentioned but that of the parent, the family was baptized on the parent's faith. This case greatly strengthens the proposition that the children



(family) were *always* baptized, if present, on their own faith, if they believed in the Lord, otherwise on the faith of the believing parent.

To the threadbare objection that *perhaps* there were no little children in any of these families, I answer: (1), The *language* teaches the doctrine and the duty, for it requires the baptism of *the family*, and little children constitute an important part of the family of their parents; (2), In each of these four cases the family, whether composed of little children or big children, matters not, was baptized, not on the faith of the children, but on the faith of the parent. The faith of the parent is the only faith mentioned in the record. The case of the jailer is not a contradiction, but a confirmation; for Acts xvi. 34, is in the Greek "he rejoiced with all his house, (he) having believed in God." He did the believing, and his house united with him in the rejoicing, as they were united with him in their baptism—*all on his faith*.

### III.

#### CHRIST COMMANDS HOUSEHOLD OR FAMILY (INFANT) BAPTISM.

At the time of the great reformation (Heb. ix. 10) Christ gave his apostles this commis-

sion, "Go ye therefore and teach (*disciple*) all *nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxxiii. 19, 20.) Who were the apostles to *disciple*, enroll as pupils of Christ? "ALL NATIONS." How were they to enroll these *disciples* of Christ? "BAPTIZING THEM." Baptizing who? "ALL NATIONS." How can a *nation* be baptized? Only by baptizing the integral parts, the constituent elements of the nation. What constitutes a nation? It is not men only, nor women only, nor *isolated individuals* of any class or sex, but *families*, including men and women and *their children*. There has never been, and can never be, a nation without families, parents and their children, any more than there can be water without oxygen and hydrogen. The children are as essential to the existence of a nation as the men and the women, and therefore the command of Christ applies to them as truly and as fully as it does to their parents. Christ did not say baptizing men and women, but "baptizing them" (*all nations*); and since children are essential to the existence of the nation, since it is *the family* that constitutes the na-



tion, Christ's command requires baptism to be administered to the children as imperatively as to their parents. The very same divine command that warrants the baptism of men and of women warrants the baptism of their children. To neglect or refuse their baptism is the sin of disobedience to the same divine command of which you would be guilty to neglect or refuse baptism for yourself. They are as truly a part of this nation as you are, and their baptism is as explicitly and as emphatically commanded as is your baptism.

There is no escape from this conclusion, for the word *nation*, wherever used in the Scriptures, always includes the children with their parents. Examine the record: Gen. xix.; Ex. ix.; Num. xxxi.; Duet. vii.; Josh. vi.; 1 Sam. xv.; Jonah iv., etc. The command to destroy *all the nations* of Canaan, etc., included the children with their parents, and therefore the command to baptize *all nations* included the children with their parents. The children were included in the *destruction* of their parents when God was taking vengeance; much more, MUCH MORE are they included in the *baptism* of their parents when God is showing mercy. It will not do to say the word *nation*

includes the children when there is a curse to be executed, but does not include them when there is a blessing to be bestowed: for surely God does not discriminate against the children to their destruction. No, no! ten thousand times no! Christ meant in this command to baptize all nations, just what that word always means—men and women and *their children*.

There is no escape from this conclusion, for parental representation is a universal principle in God's governmental control over man. In his every general dispensation, he has included the children with their parents. Adam's children were represented in him, and fell with him in his first transgression, as we all know to our sorrow. Noah's children were represented in him, and his offspring look with confidence upon the seal of the covenant of security against a second deluge as it spans the horizon in all the splendors of its rainbow beauty. The children of the Jew were represented in their parents, and shared with them the possession of Canaan, while the children of the Canaanite were represented in their parents, and suffered with them the destructive judgments of Jehovah. The children of Nineveh were represented in their parents, and saved with them

from national destruction, while the children of Sodom and of Gomorrah were represented in their parents, and perished with them in the fire and brimstone that came down from heaven. In every general dispensation of divine control over man, and in every covenant that God has made with the human family, we find the children represented in their parents. In every nation whose history has come down to us, and in every government now extant on our globe, we find the children represented in their parents. In every tribe in heathen lands, and in every community in Christian countries, we find the social standing of the children, during the tender years of infancy at least, fixed and determined by the social standing of their parents. And if this universal principle of parental representation did not prevail in the visible kingdom of God, it would be a new and a strange thing under the sun. It would be contrary to all analogy, and to the constitution of the church under the Old Testament, in which the children received the token of membership with their parents. It would be for God to show less grace in his kingdom of grace than in the kingdom of nature; under the gospel than under the law, so that in this respect the gos-

pel would be the very opposite of good news. If the apostles had ever promulgated the abrogation of God's universal principle of parental representation, that the children were to be excluded from the church under the New Testament, they would have provoked the bitterest opposition on this account; they would have seen the Jewish nation converted into a raging, howling mob, whose tumultuous uproars would have rent the vaulted heavens, and been echoing in our ears unto this day, while from all the mothers in Israel would have been heard weeping and wailing and great lamentation, more bitter and more clamorous than that of Rachel when she "refused to be comforted because her children were not." But there never was the faintest whisper of such a complaint against the apostles, nor did their bitterest enemies ever accuse them of separating the parents from their children, and leaving the lambs out of the fold; for the apostles clearly taught that this universal principle of parental representation was a fundamental principle in the church under the New Testament, as it had been in the church under the Old Testament. In the first sermon after Christ gave his great command, "Go disciple all nations (men, wo-



men and their children), baptizing them," etc., Peter said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you; . . . for the promise is unto you and to *your children*," etc. And every time the apostles baptized a parent whose children were present, they also baptized those children, showing conclusively that they understood the command, to baptize "all nations," to include the children with their parents.

There is no escape from this conclusion, for when the Lord Almighty baptized a nation, he included the children with their parents. "And were ALL baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (1 Cor. x. 2.) The hundreds and thousands of little children who passed through the Red Sea were as truly and as fully baptized as were their parents. God did not separate the parents from their children, and leave the little ones out (in Egypt). Christ says, baptize all nations, and he shows us what he means by nations when he baptized the Jewish nation—men and women and *their children*.

Tell me, ye parents, ye who have been unintentionally so cruel to your offspring, if ye had stood with Israel that memorable day, when the Almighty baptized them unto Moses, would ye have thrust your little ones back, and re-

fused to allow them to receive that blessed baptism with you? Then tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, that in the face of this most imperative command of your risen Lord ye refuse to take your little ones into this more blessed covenant, and deny to them this more blessed baptism?

#### IV.

THE CHURCH OF GOD HAS ALWAYS BELIEVED AND  
PRACTICED HOUSEHOLD OR FAMILY (INFANT)  
BAPTISM.

It was the faith and practice of the church under the Old Testament, as all admit, if, as Paul teaches (Col. ii. 11, 12), circumcision and baptism are identical. It was the faith and practice of the church during the days of the apostles, as has been proved from the New Testament. It was the faith and practice of the church during the first two centuries of the Christian era, as is evident from the fact, that of the only twelve "church fathers," parts of whose writings have come down to us, nine mention infant baptism, and all who mention it speak of it as the common practice of the church. It is also an undisputed fact, that of all the catalogues of heresies drawn up during



those centuries, some of which contain as many as eighty, infant baptism is never mentioned, showing that nobody disputed the divine origin of this doctrine, as believed and practiced by the church. Justin Martyr, probably born about the year 100, and while John was yet alive, says, "There are many of us of both sexes, some sixty and some seventy years old, who were made *disciples* (baptized, Matt. xxviii. 19) from their childhood." Ireneus, the disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple and friend of John and pastor of the church at Smyrna, only a few miles from John's home at Ephesus, was born about the year 120, and says, "Christ came to redeem all by himself—all who through him are regenerated to God (baptized); *infants* and little children and young men and older persons. Hence he passed through every age, and for the infants became an infant, sanctifying infants," etc. The shepherd of Hermas, who lived about the year 150, and had, according to Neander, "great authority in the first centuries," says, "*All infants* are in honor with the Lord, and are esteemed first of all; the baptism of water is necessary to all." Origen, who was born about the year 180, says, "According to the usage of the church, *baptism* is

*given to infants.*" "The church received an order from the apostles *to baptize infants.*" And he says he himself was baptized in infancy. Tertullian, who was born about the year 220, speaks of infant baptism as the common practice of the church, and he opposed it, not that it was an innovation or heresy, but because he claimed that sins committed after baptism were unpardonable, and therefore baptism should be deferred in *all cases* until near the close of life. Pelagius, born about the year 350, and perhaps the greatest traveller of his day, says he "had never heard of any impious heretic or sectary who had denied infant baptism." "What can be so impious as to hinder the baptism of infants?" Augustine, the greatest scholar of his age, says, "The whole church of Christ has constantly held that infants were baptized. *Infant baptism the whole church practices.* It was not instituted by councils, but was ever in use." I will not quote later witnesses, as it is generally admitted that infant baptism has been the common practice of the church from the days of Augustine. With the exception of the Petrobrussians, a fanatical sect, that sprang up in the south of France during the twelfth century, and soon

disappeared, no branch of the church rejected the doctrine of infant baptism until the rise of the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century. For fifteen hundred years immediately succeeding the death of Christ, infant baptism was the faith and practice of the church in Europe, Asia and Africa. It has always been, and is to-day, the faith and practice of every branch of the church, Greek, Roman and Protestant, except the Anabaptists and their offspring; and these different branches of the church, with some four hundred millions of members, include the far largest part of the wisest, most intelligent, most scholarly and most pious people in Christendom. I have given you this chain of historic events simply to show that the doctrine I have declared unto you from the Scriptures is and has always been believed by the church of God, with a slight exception in these last three centuries.

## V.

THE OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE BEING ALL UN-  
TENABLE CONFIRMS THE SCRIPTURAL AND THE  
HISTORIC ARGUMENTS FOR HOUSEHOLD OR  
FAMILY (INFANT) BAPTISM.

The argument is this: that doctrine must be true for which so much scripture can be urged,

and against which so little can be said, and that little having no foundation in fact. What are the principal objections to infant baptism?

It is objected that only male children were circumcised, and therefore these only should be baptized, which is not the doctrine of infant baptism. I answer that the extension of the seal to adult females is good for infant females, and the same reason for giving the token of membership under the New Testament to mothers warrants the baptism of their daughters. But even if this were not true (it is), even if circumcision and baptism were not identical (they are), still this objection would be worthless, because infant baptism does not stand or fall with the identity of this sacrament, but is abundantly taught in many passages of the New Testament, as we have seen.

It is objected that baptism is conditioned on faith. (Mark xvi. 16.) Certainly; on the faith of the individual or *of the parent*. (Acts xvi. 15.) Baptism is conditioned on the faith of the individual only so far as salvation is conditioned on individual faith, for the same scripture that says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," also says, "he that believeth not shall be damned." If infants can-



not be baptized because they cannot believe, then they cannot be saved, because they cannot believe. If, as all Christians agree, infants can be saved, although they cannot believe, the infants can be baptized, although they cannot believe. This text leaves you *infant baptism* or *infant damnation*. Take your choice. God hath chosen the first, and commands you to observe it.

It is objected that infant baptism involves infant communion. No. Infant membership did not involve infant communion under the Old Testament; does not entitle the infant to exercise the privileges of adult citizenship in any kingdom, civil or ecclesiastical. Your little children ARE members or citizens of Kentucky, but they are not permitted to vote and hold office until they reach the age prescribed by the State, when it is presumed they will be qualified for the duties of adult citizens. They attain their majority in the State when they give evidence of possessing the requisite qualification (the prescribed age), and they attain their majority in the church when they give evidence of possessing the requisite qualification (a new heart). Their membership is recognized in the church by baptism, and their ma-

jority by their admission to the Supper, and to all the higher privileges of adult church membership. This objection confirms the doctrine of infant baptism, by showing how beautifully this doctrine harmonizes with the standing and the treatment of children under every government that has ever existed on our globe.

It is objected that infant baptism can do no good, because the little children do not understand it. Those little Jews eight days old did not understand circumcision, but was it no good? It was God's ordinance. Those infants brought to Jesus did not understand his blessing them, but was it no good? It was the blessing of Christ. Those thousands of little ones whom the Almighty baptized at the Red Sea (1 Cor. x. 2) did not understand their baptism, but was it no good? It was baptism by the Almighty. Those thousands of little children whom Moses baptized at Mt. Sinai (Heb. ix. 19) did not understand their baptism, but was it no good? It was baptism by God's command. Your little ones, gasping in the grip of fell disease, did not understand your prayer with strong crying and tears before the mercy-seat, but was it no good? Surely every one knows that our understanding is never the



measure of the good we may receive, else this world would be filled with paupers, and heaven would receive no emigrants from earth. Infant baptism can do the little children good, else God would not have ordained it. It is a blessing to them in that MEMORY, one of the most eloquent, powerful and persuasive preachers, whose voice is ever heard in the secret chambers of the heart, will preach to them in after years, recalling that sweetly solemn scene which they believe, on the best of evidence, occurred in their infancy, when their godly father and saintly mother, now, it may be, looking down on them from the mansions in glory, entered into solemn covenant with God on their behalf, and dedicated them to Jesus Christ. I have seen, as others have, the results of this preaching in fruit unto salvation, where all other preaching had failed. It is a blessing to the children in that their parents are parties to this covenant, in which God gives them *special* promises of grace and wisdom and strength for the discharge of their momentous duties to the souls of their little ones. It is a blessing to the children in that God himself is a party to this covenant, and binds himself to bring these children to a personal acceptance of Christ as their

Saviour, if only the parents will be true to their covenant vows. And it is an undeniable fact that very few of the children of the covenant perish in their iniquity, and these would not if their parents did not fail through unbelief in claiming the covenant blessings and in fulfilling their covenant vows. In the riches of his grace God often comes over the sins of parents to save their children; but those parents who neglect to enter into covenant with God on behalf of their children, according to his appointment, have no such claims upon him, and no such pleas to urge with him for the salvation of their children, as they would have had they dedicated their children to God in his covenant. In neglecting this duty you cannot say you have done *all* you could for their salvation, for here is one important duty undone. That they may be saved is my desire and prayer; but if they perish in their iniquity, will you be altogether free from their blood? Will it be a pleasant and comforting reflection, as you sit over against their graves, that you never dedicated them to God, nor entered into covenant with him on their behalf; never obeyed his command on this subject, but always refused his covenant promises and assistance for bringing them up

in the nurture of the Lord; never allowed that token of the covenant (baptism) to be applied to them which would have testified that you, your church and your God, expected them to grow up in the love of Christ; never brought to bear on them for their salvation all those influences that flow from this sweetly solemn sacrament? If you would spare yourselves all occasion for such bitter reflections, if you would invoke all available influences for the salvation of your children, if you would obey the imperative command of him who died for you and rose again, whose you are and whom you serve, keep in the letter and *the spirit*, and rejoice in all the blessedness of this precious doctrine of infant baptism. And may the blessing of the God who loves the little children, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the great covenant-keeping God, who keepeth covenant with the fathers and with their children *after* them, abide on you, and give all your children a place in the family of our Father in heaven.